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Exclusive Disability

The segregation and exclusiveness of disability has become normal in our society. This distinction is clearly seen in our educational systems by setting aside “special education” from regular education. The separation creates immediate grouping from a young age and to students growing up in that system it’s what they’re used to, and this is the problem. In Syracuse University this exclusiveness is seen throughout campus and in the colleges themselves. The school of engineering at Syracuse University creates the feel of inclusivity, but is that enough?

The idea of the abled-body being what is normal has become the dominant culture. “…dominant identities are not really alternatives but rather the natural order of things.”(McRuer 383), the ideology that the non-disabled are dominant has created a tear between normal and abnormal which in turn has assigned a concrete definition to the word “disability”. Everyone aspires to become someone great in life, create a change in the world, make the world a better place, but sometimes these aspirations are outweighed by other factors in a person’s life. “Nearly everyone wants to be normal. And who can blame them, if the alternative is being abnormal, or deviant, or not being one of the rest of us? Put it in those terms, there doesn’t seem to be a choice at all. Especially in America where [being] normal probably outranks all other aspirations” (McRuer 385). Being normal is outranked by other aspiration, the fact that being normal has become so superficial that it seems the only way to succeed is to be “normal”. The College of Engineering does give disabled students opportunities to do well with accommodations for them, but this increases the feel of inclusivity and the want to be normal. The want to be normal shouldn’t be what anyone should aim for; it should be the want to change the perception of their weakness, and powerless image into something that takes them out of this segregated corner and include themselves in the majority.

Since the late 1800’s segregation and oppression have been factors in society that have created distinctions between superior and inferior and is still present but isn’t so obvious. “…backwards attitudes about disability are not the basis for disability oppression, disability oppression is the basis for backwards attitudes.” (Charlton 151), if the disabled weren’t oppressed people wouldn’t have the exclusive attitude toward disabled. In primary education disabled students are put in “special education”, students who are abled-bodied see this separation but aren’t explained why it is that it is this way. “I was judged for being in special education by the kids around me and it seemed like it was an automatic thing.” (Sandy), students already see special education as a separate thing and being taught while in this type of system it creates segregation socially and it doesn’t seem wrong that it has been this way. The ideology that being separate socially is so strong in student by the time they reach higher education that it becomes indifferent. As I walked through Link Hall I haven’t seen a disabled person in any of my classes or inside the building, the awareness of the disabled is a hidden element that should be more open to everyone, the way disability is hidden and kept away from everyone else is almost foreshadowing the way disability is treated in the engineering work field. Still excluded and still struggling to be just like all other engineers who are “normal”.

Disability over time has changed, this change has brought a new meaning to the word disability and we need to make it heard by “reassigning meaning” to the word disability. The word disabled has always had a negative connotation designated towards itself along with the word special. “…dictionaries insist that *special* be reserved for things that surpass what is common, are distinct among others of their kind, are peculiar to a specific person, have a limited or specific function…” (Linton 227), the word special is meant for things that are beyond normal, things that are beyond expectation, not below the expectation. This negative feel of this word when put in education changes the meaning of the word completely; “special education” isn’t something that is above the normal.

**MY ESSAY IS NOT COMPLETE I KNOW WHAT I NEED, I JUST HAVENT FINISHED GETTING HOW IM GOING TO COMBINE MY CONCEPTS IN THE END.**